

MINI-READER GUIDE

THIS IS AN ASSEMBLAGE OF EXCERPTS DRAWN FROM FOUR TEXTS THAT HAVE INFORMED MY RESEARCH, WHICH INVESTIGATES:

THE VISIBILITY OF CREATIVE LABOUR IN CONTEMPORARY HANDCRAFTED IMAGE-MAKING (THROUGH THE CASE STUDY OF STOP-MOTION), IN RELATION TO THE GROWING USE OF OPAQUE AI-DRIVEN PRODUCTION PIPELINES.



CAREFULLY CUT EDGES, REFERENCING THE IMPORTANCE OF CRAFT IN THE 21ST CENTURY, AN ARTICLE BY PHILOSOPHER JOEL UILI, WHICH DISCUSSES CRAFT AS A PROCESS OF CARE FOR BOTH THE WORK AND THE PRACTITIONER.



BURNT EDGES, ACCOMPANYING EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH NOMINT DIRECTOR AND FOUNDER YANNIS KONSTANTINIDIS AND BBC CREATIVE'S PAUL BAILEY, INITIATED FOR THE COVERAGE OF THE MILANO CORTINA WINTER GAMES, PRODUCED IN STOP-MOTION WITH FIRE AS A MATERIAL.



TORN EDGES, ECHOING AN ARTICLE BY POPPY THAXTER ON THE IMPORTANCE OF INTEGRATING BEHIND-THE-SCENES CONTENT INTO COMMUNICATION IN THE AGE OF AI.



PERFORATED EDGES, REFERENCING THE DIWO PRINCIPLE DEVELOPED BY THE FURTHERFIELD COLLECTIVE IN THE EARLY 2000S, WHICH PROMOTES COLLABORATIVE, DECENTRALIZED FORMS OF ARTISTIC PRODUCTION.

THE CONNECTIONS AND REFLECTIONS I DRAW FROM THESE EXCERPTS ARE ANNOTATED IN THIS TYPEFACE.

In September 2012, Claire Bishop wrote an article on Art Forum's web site, asking "WHATEVER HAPPENED TO DIGITAL ART?" Bishop argues, there are no signs of digital art being represented in the contemporary art world by artists themselves, and asks why so few contemporary artists engage with "the question of what it means to think, see, and filter affect through the digital, [and] reflect deeply on how we experience, and are altered by, the digitization of our existence?" [ibid] Bishop says there seems to be a nostalgic nod by artists towards analogue technology "The continued prevalence of analog film reels and projected slides in the mainstream art world seems to say less about revolutionary aesthetics than it does about commercial viability."

IT IS STRIKING THAT THIS ARTICLE, WRITTEN BEFORE THE RISE OF AI, HIGHLIGHTED THE PREDOMINANCE OF ANALOGUE AESTHETICS OVER DIGITAL ART WITHIN THE CONTEMPORARY ART LANDSCAPE.

A DECADE LATER, THE WIDESPREAD USE OF AI-GENERATED CONTENT NOW INVERTS THIS QUESTION:

WHAT PLACE DOES THE HANDMADE STILL HOLD WITHIN AN INCREASINGLY AUTOMATED DIGITAL CULTURE?



Coleman, E.(2025) *Claymation in prompts*.@elicoleman

IS THE PAINSTAKING NATURE OF CRAFT BEING THREATENED BY THE DEVELOPMENT OF IMAGE-GENERATION TOOLS IN THE AGE OF AI?

We dedicated just over a month purely to testing. We worked at Armory FX with specialist technicians who ensured safety and helped us explore different materials and techniques. We were literally playing with fire and observing how different materials behaved.

We started with still photography to understand how it read on camera, then progressed into motion tests tailored to specific shots from the script. Alongside that, we were figuring out frame rates, lighting set-ups and camera settings.

A craft is a set of skills (tangible and intangible) that when combined creates a work.

From a practical perspective, you also learn that not all frames are equal. Some frames take minutes, others take hours, and that's fine. On this project, some frames took exceptionally long because we needed consistency across movement, even though the fire itself was unpredictable.

A good example is the skeleton sequence around the mountain. We needed the fire trail to form a clean circular movement, which meant carefully light-painting the fire frame by frame until the shape felt right. It takes patience, experience and trust to know when to keep pushing and when to move on.

Patience, care and exactitude is being learnt and deepened in the process of any craft.

As we head deeper into the 21st century we face a similar moment to Morris—scale, productivity and economic growth are touted as virtues in our culture. However people are becoming disenchanted.

Burnout, the crisis of meaning, hyper-consumerism, fast-paced work environments. All symptoms of a society that is becoming more and more aware that something is wrong. No longer willing to sacrifice themselves on the pyre of unquestioned work culture, humans are seeking work that means more, that's sacred and has a position in their experience that gives them life, rather than takes it away.

DO THESE EXCERPTS REFER TO A PHENOMENON OF AI FATIGUE?

For a company like Coca-Cola, with the budget to make something, as well as produce a snappy behind-the-scenes film that doubles as marketing, the decision to produce its renowned Holidays are Coming Christmas ads with AI was met with backlash. Something once famous for symbolising the magic of Christmas, its saccharine blend of festive warmth, joy, and nostalgia – something real – now reduced down to an AI-sludge clone.

CAN CRAFT OPERATE AS AN ACT OF RESISTANCE IN A DIGITAL ERA?

HOW CAN CRAFT ASSERT ITS VALUE NEXT TO AI MAINSTREAM PRODUCTION PROCESSES?

DIWO: DO IT WITH OTHERS

“For brands, it also builds trust,” says Priscilla Ong, a Singapore-based brand photographer and stop motion artist. “People appreciate knowing there’s real care and intention poured into the visuals they put out. That level of craftsmanship and authenticity helps extend the brand’s presence beyond the original deliverable.”

Brands like Ffern have made the handmade process part of their story, reinforcing value through visible effort. Bespoke craftsmanship for the brand is a key narrative device.

SOME BRANDS CHOOSE CRAFT AS A MARKETING LANGUAGE TO REFLECT THEIR VALUES OF TRANSPARENCY OR CRAFTSMANSHIP

“...the role of the artist today has to be to push back at existing infrastructures, claim agency and share the tools with others to reclaim, shape and hack these contexts in which culture is created.” (Catlow 2010)

In music and art culture, artists have been defining their autonomy against the dominance of mainstream culture for years. Further-field’s and DIWO’S own history began with experimental sound and music, with pirate radio stations and collaborative street art projects in the late 80s and early 90s. A Present-day example where we can see artists carving out their own mutual spaces of independence, is in the contemporary Indie Music scene.

Strawberry Thief,
Blackthorn and Pimpernel.

These are a few of the most popular wallpaper designs by William Morris the 19th century textile designer, poet, writer and artist. Each of the designs was done by hand, either by Morris or with fellow craftsmen. Believing that beauty was lost in mechanisation when labor was segmented and distributed for mass production.

So whilst at the time, the world saw industrialisation as liberation with promises such as, “Physical goods for all” and “Economic growth”, Morris saw that the relationship between the maker and their creation had been cast aside. The human being was split into pieces. If humanity continued to walk down this path, both the individual and the work itself would lose its spirit. This caused him to reject mass production and instead choose craft.

Mass production centralises productivity whereas craft centralises the experience and inner development of the practitioner as well as the quality of the work done. In other words, embracing and deepening our relationship to craft in the 21st century is paramount as we pursue our vocations.

The Arts & Crafts movement of the late 19th century championed the value of visible process and the maker's hand, rebellling against mass-produced uniformity.

Artisans took pride in showing the marks of human workmanship – tool marks, hand stitching, visible signatures – as proof of authenticity. Today's hunger echoes that ethos: proof that real people, not machines, are thinking and feeling, experimenting and creating.

Just as the Arts & Crafts movement once responded to industrialisation by celebrating the maker's touch, today's creatives are using behind-the-scenes content to reclaim authenticity in the AI age.

HOW IS THE LEGACY OF
THE ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT
RESURFACING IN THE AGE
OF GENERATIVE AI?

II. Standards hold us true

Mastering one's craft is an elevated ideal aimed at quality, and practitioners that pursue it do true work. Both craft and the vocation ask us to care about our contribution.

Churning things out for the sake of production can cause us to drop below the threshold of the intended spirit of the work itself.

When famous chef Marco Pierre White ran the kitchen "Harveys" he would never send a dish that dropped below his standard. He was the last line of defence. Knowing that any drop in the work would mean that people who came to be fed, nourished and taste delight, would miss what they came for.

When someone purchases a piece of furniture we've made for their home, watches one of our films, takes 20 minutes of their short-changed time to listen to our podcast, they deserve our best. Craft isn't against volume but it does not answer to it. It appreciates that we are only here for a moment of time and if we believe that every second is precious, we can act from this place.

For us to continue elevating ourselves towards our calling, we need to maintain any standard we've reached whilst continually seeking to raise them.

**BEYOND A NECESSARY
PURSUIT OF MASTERY,**

**HOW CAN WE AIM
FOR HIGHER FORMS
OF COMPLEXITY
IN ORDER TO REAFFIRM
THE RELEVANCE
OF CRAFT?**

Yannis Konstantinidis - Director and Founder, NOMINT:
My first reaction was that it felt almost impossible.

It felt impossible not only because of the fire itself, but also because of how ambitious the script was. To do it justice, it had to be executed at the same level of ambition. It was daunting. It was very clear that if we were going to attempt this, we had to go big.

At first, I genuinely wasn't sure it was achievable. But after sitting with it, we realised that if everyone was willing to commit fully and aim for something bold rather than safe, then we were excited to take that leap and figure out the how along the way.

THE USE OF FIRE AS A PRIMARY MATERIAL IN THE ANIMATION MAKES IT A MILESTONE FOR THE INDUSTRY. HERE, THE STUDIO EMBRACES WHAT IT DESCRIBES AS "OUTRAGEOUS" CRAFT.

When the new Apple TV ident launched – a brief five-second animated graphic – there wasn't much initial buzz. That changed, however, when a short behind-the-scenes video was revealed, showing that the central logo was crafted entirely by hand from glass. The production deliberately avoided using AI, CGI, or 3D modelling techniques. Instead, it relied on meticulous manual manipulation of light, colour, and reflection to achieve its striking visual effect.

A SIMILAR PHENOMENON OCCURRED WHEN THE BEHIND-THE-SCENES FEATURE FOR 'TRAILS WILL BLAZE' WAS RELEASED, WHICH GENERATED MORE VIEWS THAN THE FILM ITSELF.



BBC Creative and Nomint (2026) *Trails Will Blaze – Behind the Scenes* [video].

BEHIND-THE-SCENES: HOW IS THIS PROCESS-LED APPROACH INCREASINGLY ASSERTING ITSELF ALONGSIDE CRAFT?

III. The twofold nature to any work

There are two sides to any work; the material and the spirit.

The material side refers to what is tangible, tactile and sensorially available to us.

If we think back to the shoemaker, it is the shoe itself. The leather, the colour and the feeling on our fingertips as we lace up the shoe.

The spirit side is intangible, unseen and felt within. It refers to the animating force that brought the shoe into existence and thereby transfers an experience through the intention of the work to another. By placing one's foot inside the leather shoe, it gives the individual an experience that makes it meaningful. Saying, "This is exactly what I was looking for" suggests that the work contributes to one's life in a significant way.

This is the spirit in the material at work, which was poured into it up until the completion of the work. The littered paper drafts, full of sketches on the floor with possible shoe designs, the time spent diligently sewing the curves and the persistence in sourcing the right material for the heel of the shoe lives in the work. Though it is unseen, humans can feel quality and care.

This applies in all fields, from crafts that use their hands to crafts that serve people face to face. Whether we are creating experiences, conjuring up thoughts or designing interfaces, the spirit of the work is there. Which means that for us, rather than focusing on the pure output of production as our main concern, our vocation asks us to always remember the spirit of the work. It is not an afterthought and is vital to the experience of what we bring into the world. The materials and forms that we use in our work hold and represent the spirit that was poured into it.

THE "SPIRIT" CAN REFER TO THE CREATIVE PROCESS, AND BEHIND-THE-SCENES CONTENT ALLOWS THIS INTANGIBLE EXPERIENCE TO BE SHARED.

There was also extensive clean-up, not just removing rigs, which is standard in stop-motion, but also clearing away debris and burned material that naturally accumulated on set. Colour grading was crucial in giving the film its cinematic finish.

That said, the guiding principle was always to stay as true as possible to what was captured in-camera. Post-production was there to support and enhance the physical reality, not replace it.

*TRADITIONALLY,
RIGS ARE REMOVED, HIDDEN
IN POST-PRODUCTION,
TO CREATE AN ILLUSION
OF REALITY.*

*WHAT IF WE MAKE THE EFFORT
TO SHOW THOSE EFFORTS?*

THE REVEAL OF INNER WORKINGS: A NEW KIND OF ENDEAVOUR?

Emilie, a graphic designer and art director who has worked with some of the UK's most prestigious theatres, chooses to highlight not only the finished production posters but also the unseen aspects of her work, often through Instagram reels or stories.

"Working in theatre poster design," she says, "people just don't understand it." Her work with productions carries the responsibility of capturing audience's imaginations and conveying the essence of each story. The hard part? Emilie is working months in advance, with poster designs based on ideas and cues from the director or playwright.

"There is only a script; there's no place; there's no set design; and there's no costumes, and often there are no actors. When Instagram started doing the Stories format, I thought, 'Oh, I could try it' and the response has been amazing."

Providing clarity and explanations educates potential customers on why all stages of the creative process matter – it's not just about the final result.

*AN EXTRA-LABOUR
FOR PRACTITIONERS?*

Creatives are increasingly challenged to constantly 'prove' their value, with their work subjected to cost analyses that demand justification beyond artistic merit. BTS content is another layer of that, adding extra labour to already-demanding schedules, often without any extra budget.

Design – and other disciplines in the humanities – have long been undervalued by governments and broader society, despite their profound influence on culture, communication, and innovation. With this in mind, why should the onus be on creatives to signal that their work matters? Or, in a time when online content – from photos to videos – becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish what's 'real', maybe this is our new reality.

III. Quality work contributes to humanity

Quality work lasts and a testament to the depth of the work's spirit is its ability to hold itself across time. Philosophers still talk about Plato's allegories, millions of tourists pilgrimage every year to the Louvre and vinyl records are experiencing a revival. Meaning that quality work doesn't last only from a material perspective, humans want to hang onto and re-experience its spirit. Which means that if we wish to contribute to humanity through our vocation, we need to be willing to slow down, revise and re-attempt. Creating lasting work that can endure time requires rigour and deep detailed knowledge and skill.

*CREATING A LASTING
EVIDENCE, KEEPING A VALUABLE
TRACE OF AN IMPALPABLE
EXPERIENCE, MEMORIES
OF THE MOMENT.*

The practice of DIWO allows space for an openness where a rich mixing of components from different sources crossover and build a hybrid experience. It challenges and renegotiates the power roles between artists and curators. It brings all actors to the fore, artists become co-curators alongside the curators, and the curators themselves can also be co-creators. The 'source' materials are open to all; to remix, re-edit and redistribute, either within a particular DIWO event or project, or elsewhere. The process is as important as the outcome, forming relationally aware peer enactments. It is a living art, exploiting contemporary forms of digital and physical networks as a mode of open praxis, as in the Greek word for doing, and as in, doing it with others.

DOING CRAFT WITH OTHERS, BY SHARING AUTHORSHIP AND THE EXPERIENCE OF MAKING, OFFERS A WAY TO BYPASS HEGEMONIC AND COMPETITIVE SYSTEMS.

Importantly, showing the human elements – the challenges, experiments, even the failures – paves the way for new kinds of honesty. It creates opportunities for creatives to connect, learn, and empathise with one another, building a sense of community in a field often marked by competition of isolation.

YK: Early on, I was very excited about using a robotic arm to light-paint the skeleton's route around the mountain using a gas line. On the day it became clear that the system couldn't give us the precise shape we needed.

The goal was never a single uniform fire effect, but a living, shifting language of fire across the film.

So I made a decision to abandon the robotic approach. Instead, we built a steel track around the mountain in the exact shape we wanted and manually light-painted the fire along it.

It ended up being a blessing in disguise. That day became one of the most collaborative and enjoyable shoots, with the whole team gathered around the set, taking turns shaping the fire with pocket bellows. It was messy, physical and incredibly satisfying.

TEAM-WORKING: A KEY FOR PROBLEM-SOLVING AND DECISION-MAKING IN TIMES OF STRUGGLES.

*A RESPONSE TO ISOLATION?
SHARING A PRACTICE THAT IS
INCREASINGLY SHIFTING TOWARD
SELF-SUFFICIENCY?*

**HOW CAN WE
FIND MEANING
IN SHARING
OUR CRAFT WITH
OTHERS?**

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Uili, J. (2025) *The Importance of Craft in the 21st Century*. Archer Online (Substack), 10 December.

Available at: <https://archeronline.substack.com/p/the-importance-of-craft-in-the-21st>

Madgeon, J. (2026) *How NOMINT and BBC Creative torched the Winter Olympics*. Shots.

Available at: <https://shots.net/news/view/how-nomint-and-bbc-creative-torched-the-winter-olympics>

Thaxter, P. (2026) I'm not a robot: why showing your workings has never been more important. It's Nice That.

Available at: <https://www.itsnicethat.com/features/forward-thinking-im-not-a-robot-creative-industry-120126>.

Garrett, M. (2014) DIWO (Do-It-With-Others): *Artistic co-creation as a decentralized method of peer empowerment in today's multitude*. Furtherfield.

Available at: <https://seadnetwork.wordpress.com/white-paper-abstracts/final-white-papers/diwo-do-it-with-others-artistic-co-creation-as-a-decentralized-method-of-peer-empowerment-in-todays-multitude-diwo-do-it-with-others-artistic-co-creation-as-a-decentralized-method-of-pe/>